THE AMERICAN YAWP

14. Reconstruction

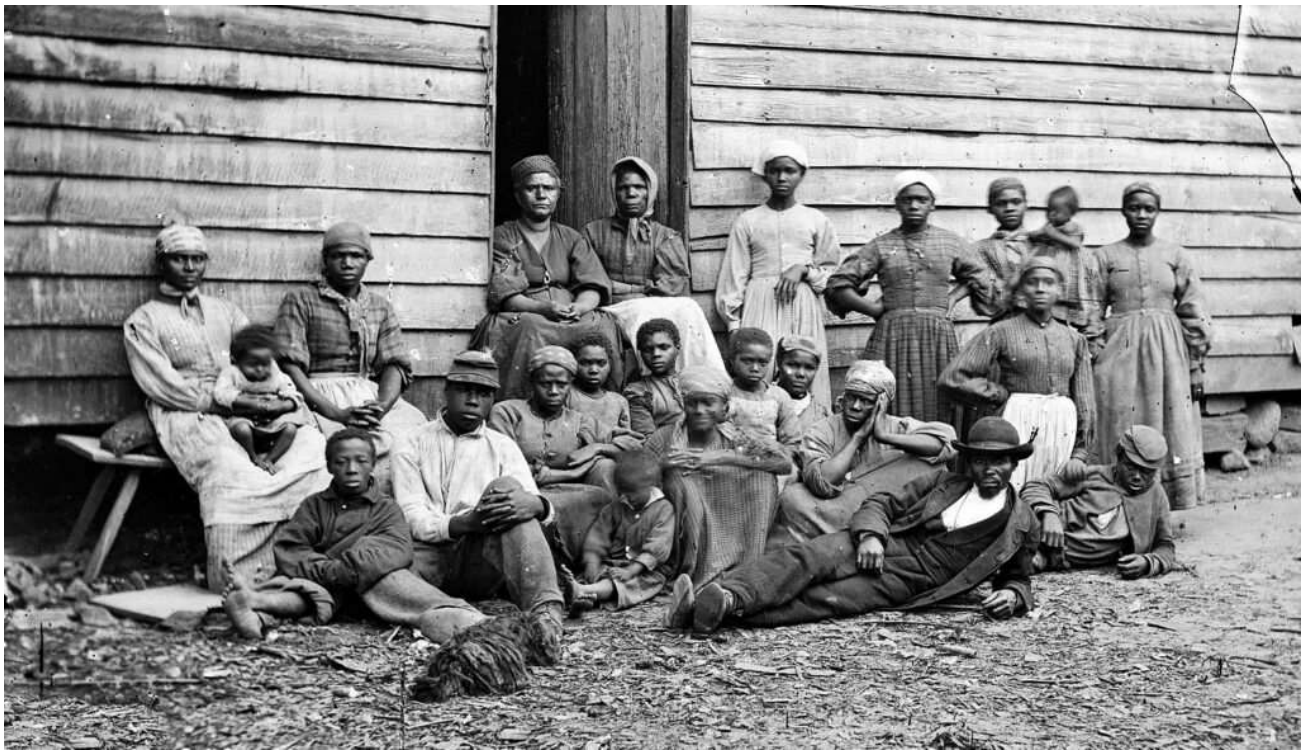

Figure 14.1. "Contrabands," Cumberland Landing, Virginia, 1862. Library of Congress.

The American Yawp is an evolving, collaborative text. Click here to help improve this chapter.

I. Introduction
II. Politics of Reconstruction
III. The Meaning of Black Freedom
IV. Reconstruction and Women
V. Racial Violence in Reconstruction
VI. Economic Development During the Civil War and Reconstruction
VII. Reconstruction and the West
VIII. The End of Reconstruction
VIII. Conclusion
IX. Primary Sources
X. Reference Material

I. Introduction

After the Civil War, the future of the South was uncertain. How would these states be brought back into the Union? Would they be conquered territories or equal states? How would they rebuild their governments, economies, and social systems? What rights did freedom confer on formerly enslaved people? The answers to many of Reconstruction's questions hinged on the concepts of citizenship, equality, and the practicalities of freedom. Americans who lived through the era engaged in the most open and widespread discussions of citizenship since the nation's founding.

Reconstruction was a moment of revolutionary possibility and violent backlash. African Americans and Radical Republicans pushed the nation to finally realize the Declaration of Independence's promises that "all men are created equal" and have "certain unalienable rights." White Democrats granted African Americans legal freedom but little more. When Black Americans and their radical allies succeeded in securing citizenship for freedpeople, a new fight commenced to determine the legal, political, and social implications of American citizenship. Resistance continued, but white Americans lacked sufficient commitment to enforce the new laws. White supremacist terrorism and electioneering undermined and then overthrew Reconstruction. Limits on human freedom endured and would stand for nearly a century more.

II. Politics of Reconstruction

Reconstruction—the effort to restore Southern states to the Union and to redefine African Americans' place in American society—began before the Civil War ended. President Abraham Lincoln began planning for the reunification of the United States in the fall of 1863.[1] With a sense that Union victory was imminent and that he could turn the tide of the war by stoking Unionist support in the Confederate states, Lincoln issued a proclamation allowing Southerners to take an oath of

allegiance. When just 10 percent of a state's voting population had taken such an oath, loyal Unionists could then establish governments.[2] These so-called Lincoln governments sprang up in pockets of Union-controlled territory in the South, including parts of Louisiana, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Unsurprisingly, these were also the places that were exempted from the liberating effects of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Initially proposed as a war aim, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation committed the United States to the abolition of slavery. However, the proclamation freed enslaved people only in areas of rebellion and left more than seven hundred thousand in bondage in Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri, as well as in Union-occupied areas of Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia.

To cement the abolition of slavery, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment on January 31, 1865. The amendment legally abolished slavery "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." Section Two of the amendment granted Congress the "power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." State ratification followed, and by the end of the year, the requisite three-fourths of the states had approved the amendment, and four million people were forever free from the slavery that had existed in North America for 250 years.[3]

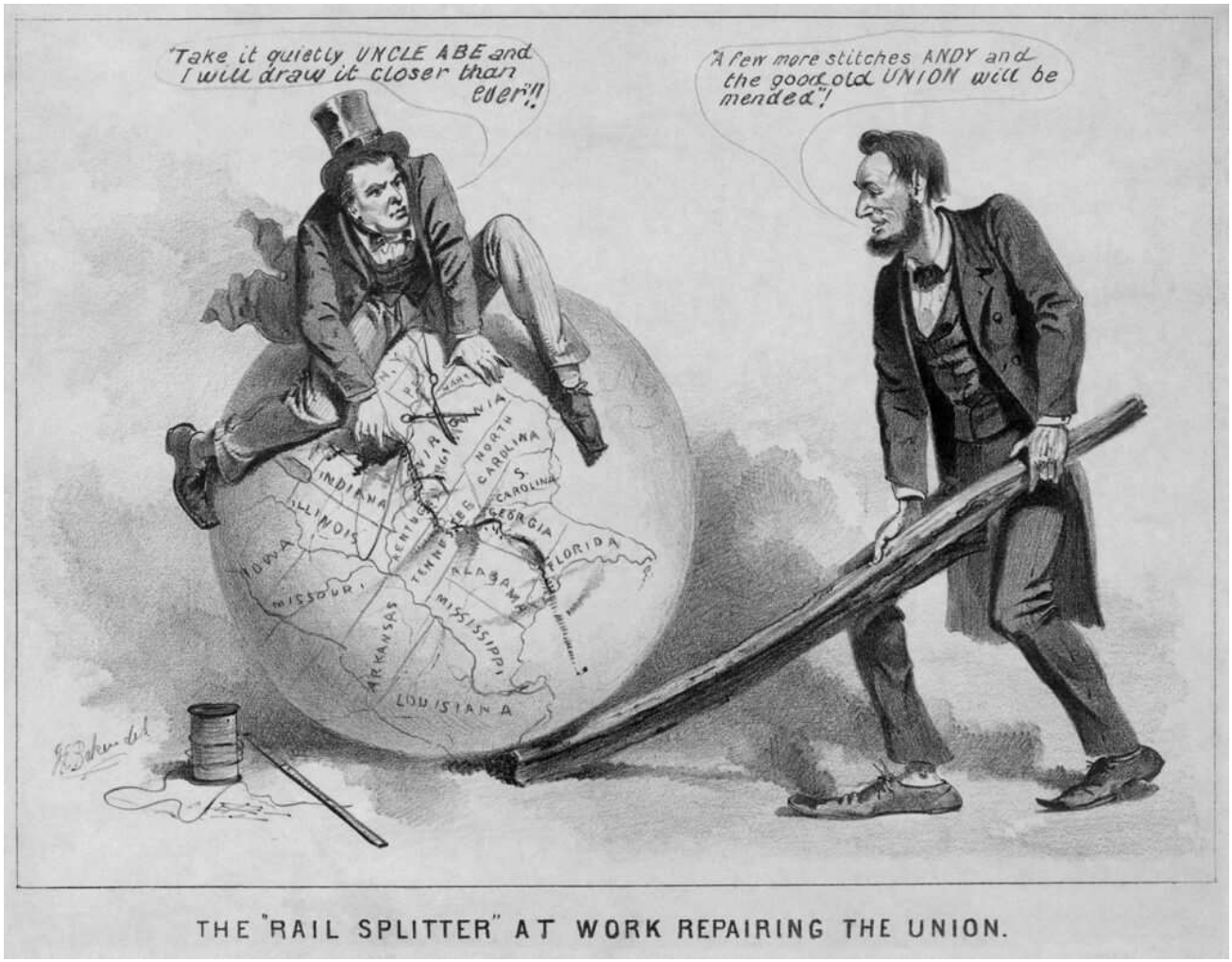

Figure 14.2. With the war coming to an end, the question of how to reunite the former Confederate states with the Union was a divisive one. Lincoln's Presidential Reconstruction plans were seen by many, including Radical Republicans in Congress, to be too tolerant towards what they considered to be traitors. This political cartoon reflects this viewpoint, showing Lincoln and Johnson happily stitching the Union back together with little anger towards the South. Joseph E. Baker, The 'Rail Splitter' at Work Repairing the Union, 1865. Library of Congress.

Lincoln's policy was lenient, conservative, and short-lived. The political winds changed when John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln on April 14, 1865, during a performance of Our American Cousin at Ford's Theater. Treated rapidly and with all possible care, Lincoln nevertheless succumbed to his wounds the following morning, leaving a somber pall over the North and especially among African Americans.

The assassination of Abraham Lincoln propelled Vice President Andrew Johnson into the executive office in April 1865. Johnson, a states'-rights, strict-constructionist, and unapologetic racist from Tennessee, offered former Confederates in Southern states a quick restoration into the Union. His Reconstruction plan required provisional Southern governments to void their ordinances of secession, repudiate their Confederate debts, and ratify the

Thirteenth Amendment. On all other matters, the conventions could do what they wanted with no federal interference. He pardoned all Southerners engaged in the rebellion with the exception of wealthy planters who possessed more than $20,000 in property.[4] The Southern aristocracy would have to appeal to Johnson for individual pardons. In the meantime, Johnson hoped that a new class of Southerners would replace the extremely wealthy in leadership positions.

Many Southern governments enacted legislation that reestablished antebellum power relationships. South Carolina and Mississippi passed laws known as Black Codes to regulate Black behavior and impose social and economic control. Other states soon followed. These laws granted some rights to African Americans, like the right to own property, marry, and make contracts. But they also denied fundamental rights. White lawmakers forbade Black men from serving on juries or in state militias, refused to recognize Black testimony against white people, apprenticed orphaned children to their former enslavers, and established severe vagrancy laws. Mississippi's vagrant law required all freedpeople to carry papers proving they had means of employment.[5] If they had no proof, they could be arrested and fined. If they could not pay the fine, the sheriff had the right to hire out his prisoner to anyone willing to pay the tax. Similar ambiguous vagrancy laws throughout the South reasserted control over Black labor in what one scholar has called "slavery by another name."[6] Black Codes effectively criminalized Black people's leisure, limited their mobility, and locked many into exploitative farming contracts. Attempts to restore the antebellum economic order largely succeeded.

These laws and outrageous mob violence against Black Southerners led Republicans to call for a more dramatic Reconstruction. So, when Johnson announced that the Southern states had been restored, congressional Republicans refused to seat delegates from the newly reconstructed states.

Figure 14.3. While no one could agree on what the best plan for reconstructing the nation would be, Americans understood the moment as critical and perhaps revolutionary. In this magnificent visual metaphor for the reconciliation of the North and South, John Lawrence postulates what might result from reunion. Reconstruction, the print seems to argue, will form a more perfect Union that upholds the ideals of the American Revolution, most importantly (as seen on a streaming banner near the top) that "All men are born free and equal." John Giles Lawrence, *Reconstruction*, 1867. Library of Congress.

Republicans in Congress responded with a spate of legislation aimed at protecting freedpeople and restructuring political relations in the South. Many Republicans were keen to grant voting rights for freedmen in order to build a new, powerful voting bloc. Some Republicans, like US Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, believed in racial equality, but the majority were motivated primarily by the interests of their political party. The only way to protect Republican interests in the South was to give the vote to the hundreds of thousands of Black men. Republicans in Congress responded to the codes with the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the first federal attempt to constitutionally define all American-born residents (except Native peoples) as citizens. The law also prohibited any restriction of citizens' "fundamental rights."[7]

The Fourteenth Amendment developed concurrently with the Civil Rights Act to ensure its constitutionality. The House of Representatives approved the Fourteenth Amendment on June 13, 1866. Section One granted citizenship and repealed the Supreme Court's infamous Dred Scott (1857) decision. Moreover, it ensured that state laws could not deny due process or discriminate against particular groups of people. The Fourteenth Amendment signaled the federal government's willingness to enforce the Bill of Rights over the authority of the states.

Because he did not believe African Americans deserved equal rights, President Johnson opposed the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment and vetoed the Civil Rights Act. But after winning a two-thirds majority in the 1866 midterm elections, Republicans overrode the veto, and in 1867, they passed the first Reconstruction Act, dissolving state governments and dividing the South into five military districts. Under these new terms, states would have to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, write new constitutions enfranchising African Americans, and abolish repressive "Black Codes" before rejoining the Union. In the face of President Johnson's repeated obstructionism, the House of Representatives issued articles of impeachment against the president. Although Johnson narrowly escaped conviction in the Senate, Congress won the power to direct a new phase of Reconstruction. Six weeks later, on July 9, 1868, the states ratified the Fourteenth Amendment, guaranteeing birthright citizenship and "equal protection of the laws."

In the 1868 presidential election, former Union General Ulysses S. Grant ran on a platform that proclaimed "Let Us Have Peace," in which he promised to protect the new status quo. On the other hand, the Democratic candidate, Horatio Seymour, promised to repeal Reconstruction. Black Southern voters helped Grant win most of the former Confederacy. Scalawags and Carpetbaggers also buttressed Republicans in the South. Scalawag was the derisive term used to describe white Republicans in the South, and carpetbaggers was the term for Northerners who traveled to the South during Reconstruction. But Black voters formed the backbone of the Republican coalition in the South.

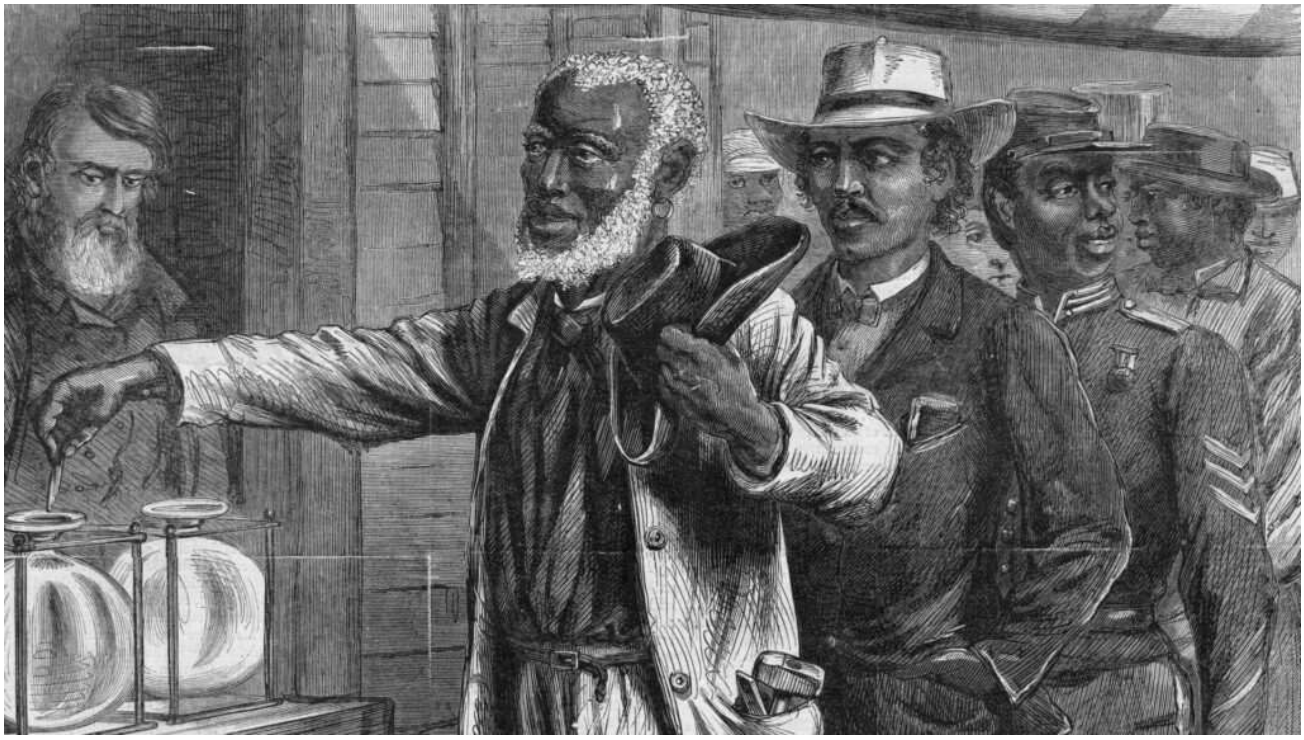

Figure 14.4. In this *Harper's Weekly* print, Black men of various occupations wait patiently for their turn as the first voter submits his ballot. Unlike other contemporary images that depicted African Americans as ignorant, unkempt, and lazy, this print shows these Black men as active citizens. Three years after the publication of this print, the Fifteenth Amendment protected the right of Black Americans to vote. Alfred R. Waud, *The First Vote*, November 1867. Library of Congress.

Reconstruction brought the first moment of mass democratic participation for African Americans. In 1860, only five states in the North allowed African Americans to vote on equal terms with whites. Yet after 1867, when Congress ordered Southern states to eliminate racial discrimination in voting, African Americans began to win elections across the South. In a short time, the South was transformed from an all-white, proslavery, Democratic stronghold to a collection of Republican-led states with African Americans in positions of power for the first time in American history.[8]

Through the provisions of the congressional Reconstruction Acts, Black men voted in large numbers and also served as delegates to the state constitutional conventions in 1868. Black Americans drew on the decades-long tradition of Colored Conventions to prepare for the moment, and Black delegates actively participated in revising state constitutions. One of the most significant accomplishments of these conventions was the establishment of a public school system. While public schools were virtually nonexistent in the antebellum period, by the end of Reconstruction, every Southern state had established a public school system.[9] Republican officials

opened state institutions like mental asylums, hospitals, orphanages, and prisons to white and Black residents, though often on a segregated basis. They actively sought industrial development, Northern investment, and internal improvements.

African Americans served at every level of government during Reconstruction. At the federal level, Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce were chosen as US senators from Mississippi. Fourteen men served in the House of Representatives. At least 270 other African American men served in patronage positions as postmasters, customs officials, assessors, and ambassadors. At the state level, more than a thousand African American men held offices in the South. P. B. S. Pinchback served as Louisiana's governor for thirty-four days after the previous governor was suspended during impeachment proceedings and was the only African American state governor until Virginia elected L. Douglas Wilder in 1989. Almost eight hundred African American men served as state legislators around the South, with African Americans at one time making up a majority in the South Carolina House of Representatives.[10]

African American officeholders came from diverse backgrounds. Many had been born free or had gained their freedom before the Civil War. Many free African Americans, particularly those in South Carolina, Virginia, and Louisiana, were wealthy and well educated, two facts that distinguished them from much of the white population both before and after the Civil War. Some, like Antoine Dubuclet of Louisiana and William Breedlove from Virginia, owned enslaved laborers before the Civil War. Others had helped enslaved people escape or taught them to read, like Georgia's James D. Porter.

ROBERT C. DE LARGE, M.C. of S. Carolina.
JEFFERSON H. LONG, M.C. of Georgia
U.S. Senator. H.R. REVELS. of Mississippi
BENJ. S. TURNER, M.C. of Alabama.
JOSIAH T. WALLS, M.C. of Florida.
JOSEPH H. RAINY, M.C. of S. Carolina.
R. BROWN ELLIOT, M.C. of S. Carolina.
THE FIRST COLORED SENATOR AND REPRESENTATIVES.
In the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States.

Figure 14.5. The era of Reconstruction witnessed a few moments of true progress. One of those was the election of African Americans to local, state, and national offices, including both houses of Congress. Pictured here are Hiram Revels (the first African American Senator) alongside six Black representatives, all from the former Confederate states. Currier & Ives, *First Colored Senator and Representatives in the 41st and 42nd Congresses of the United States*, 1872. Library of Congress.

Most African American officeholders, however, gained their freedom during the war. Among them were skilled craftsmen like Emanuel Fortune, a shoemaker from Florida; ministers such as James D. Lynch from Mississippi; and teachers like William V. Turner from Alabama. Moving into political office was a natural continuation of the leadership roles they had held in their former communities.

By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, more than two thousand African American men had served in offices ranging from local levee commissioner to US senator.[11] When the end of Reconstruction returned white Democrats to power in the South, all but a few African American officeholders lost their positions. After Reconstruction, African Americans did not enter the political arena again in large numbers until well into the twentieth century.

III. The Meaning of Black Freedom

Land was one of the major desires of the freedpeople. Frustrated by responsibility for the growing numbers of freedpeople following his troops, General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15 in January 1865, in which land in Georgia and South Carolina was to be set aside as a homestead for them. Sherman lacked the authority to confiscate and distribute land, so this plan never fully took effect.[12] One of the main purposes of the federal government's Reconstruction-era Freedmen's Bureau, however, was to redistribute land to formerly enslaved people that had been abandoned and confiscated by the federal government. Even these land grants were short lived. In 1866, land that ex-Confederates had left behind was reinstated to them.

Freedpeople's hopes of land reform were unceremoniously dashed as Freedmen's Bureau agents held meetings with them throughout the South, telling them the promise of land was not going to be honored and that instead they should plan to go back to work for their former enslaver as wage laborers. The policy reversal came as quite a shock. In one instance, Freedmen's Bureau Commissioner General Oliver O. Howard went to Edisto Island to inform the Black population there of the policy change. The Black commission's response was that "we were promised Homesteads by the government. . . . You ask us to forgive the land owners of our island. . . . The man who tied me to a tree and gave me 39 lashes and who stripped and flogged my mother and my sister . . . that man I cannot well forgive. Does it look as if he has forgiven me, seeing how he tries to keep me in a condition of helplessness?"[13]

DEPOSIT BOOK.

No. 836

Charleston S. C.

Keep this Book in good order.
Do not fold or roll it up.
Give immediate Notice if lost.

Figure 14.6. Freedman's Savings and Trust Company deposit book cover with image of President Abraham Lincoln. Courtesy of Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, College of Charleston Libraries. Smithsonian Museum of African American History.

In working to ensure that crops would be harvested, agents sometimes coerced formerly enslaved people into signing contracts with their former enslavers. However, the bureau also instituted courts where African Americans could seek redress if their employers were abusing them or not paying them. The last ember of hope for land redistribution was extinguished when Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner's proposed land reform bills were tabled in Congress. Radicalism had its limits, and the Republican Party's commitment to national economic stability eclipsed their interest in racial justice.

White Republicans' waning commitments to both racial and economic justice were reflected in the rise and collapse of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, also known as the Freedman's Bank. The Freedman's Bank was established on March 3, 1865, as a savings bank for "persons heretofore held in slavery, or their descendants."[14] Founded by white abolitionist and minister John Alvord, the Freedman's Bank represented Republicans' goals of helping formerly enslaved people develop habits of saving and "thrift," by encouraging them to open accounts, deposit their savings, and grow their wealth. At its height, the bank had over 70,000 depositors across 37 branches who had collectively deposited approximately $57 million in their bank accounts. The bank had a sprawling footprint, establishing branches in Northern cities such as New York and Philadelphia, and in the former Confederate South, in cities with large Black populations such as Jacksonville, New Orleans, and St. Louis. Despite the bank's benevolent foundations of serving the nation's freedpeople, the white trustees had different goals. The trustees and administrators, a veritable who's who of white Republicans, began the practice of making illegal loans to themselves and their business partners. Once Congress approved of amending the bank's charter in 1870, allowing the trustees to operate the bank not as a savings bank but as a commercial bank, the trustees began allowing borrowers to receive loans. By the summer of 1874, the bank had approximately $3.5 million in outstanding loans, the vast majority of which was borrowed by white people who lived in and around Washington, DC. Despite the bank's popularity both with Black depositors and

white borrowers, by early 1874, the bank was on the verge of collapse. The trustees then asked Frederick Douglass to be the bank's president mere months before Congress mandated that the bank cease operations. Douglass accepted the position in March 1874. When the bank ceased operations in July 1874, the 61,144 depositors still had $2.9 million left in their accounts.[15] Though members of Congress held hearings and heard the testimonies of trustees and depositors, no one was held to account for the bank's failure. Freedpeople had no recourse and were left to pick up the pieces of their shattered trust.

Another aspect of the pursuit of freedom was the reconstitution of families. Many freedpeople immediately left plantations in search of family members who had been sold away. Newspaper ads sought information about long-lost relatives. People placed these ads until the turn of the twentieth century, demonstrating the enduring pursuit of family reunification. Freedpeople sought to gain control over their own children or other children who had been apprenticed to white masters either during the war or as a result of the Black Codes. Above all, freedpeople wanted freedom to control their families.[16]

Many freedpeople rushed to solemnize unions with formal wedding ceremonies. Black people's desires to marry fit the government's goal to make free Black men responsible for their own households and to prevent Black women and children from becoming dependent on the government.

Freedpeople placed a great emphasis on education for their children and themselves, and the Freedmen's Bureau helped establish schools across the South. For many, the ability to finally read the Bible for themselves induced work-weary men and women to spend all evening or Sunday attending night school or Sunday school classes. It was not uncommon to find a one-room school with more than fifty students ranging in age from three to eighty. As Booker T. Washington famously described the situation, "It was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn."[17]

Many churches served as schoolhouses and as a result became central to the freedom struggle. Free and freed Black Southerners carried well-formed political and organizational skills into freedom. They developed antiracist politics and organizational skills through antislavery organizations turned church associations. Liberated from white-controlled churches, Black Americans remade their religious worlds according to their own social and spiritual desires.[18]

One of the more marked transformations that took place after emancipation was the proliferation of independent Black churches and church associations. In the 1930s, nearly 40 percent of 663 Black churches surveyed had their organizational roots in the postemancipation era.[19] Many independent Black churches emerged in the rural areas, and most of them had never been affiliated with white churches.

Many of these independent churches were quickly organized into regional, state, and even national associations, often by brigades of free Black Northerners and Midwesterners who went to the South to help the freedpeople. Through associations like the Virginia Baptist State Convention and the Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention, Baptists became the fastest growing postemancipation denomination, building on their antislavery associational roots and carrying on the struggle for Black political participation.[20]

Tensions between Northerners and Southerners over styles of worship and educational requirements strained these associations. Southern, rural Black churches preferred worship services with more emphasis on inspired preaching, while urban Black Northerners favored more orderly worship and an educated ministry.

Perhaps the most significant internal transformation in churches had to do with the role of women, a situation that eventually would lead to the development of independent women's conventions in Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches. Women like Nannie Helen Burroughs and Virginia Broughton, leaders of the Baptist Woman's Convention, worked to protect Black women from sexual violence by white men. Black representatives repeatedly articulated this concern in state

constitutional conventions early in the Reconstruction era. In churches, women continued to fight for equal treatment and access to the pulpit as preachers, even though they were already able to vote in church meetings.[21]

Black churches provided centralized leadership and organization in postemancipation communities. Many political leaders and officeholders were ministers. Churches were often the largest buildings in town and served as community centers. Access to pulpits and growing congregations provided a foundation for ministers' political leadership. Groups like the Union League, militias, and fraternal organizations all used the regalia, ritual, and even hymns of churches to inform and shape their practice.

Black churches provided space for conflict over gender roles, cultural values, practices, norms, and political engagement. With the rise of Jim Crow, Black churches would enter a new phase of negotiating relationships within the community and the wider world.

IV. Reconstruction and Women

Reconstruction involved more than the meaning of emancipation. Women also sought to redefine their roles within the nation and in their local communities. The abolitionist and women's rights movements simultaneously converged and began to clash. In the South, both Black and white women struggled to make sense of a world of death and change. In Reconstruction, leading women's rights advocate Elizabeth Cady Stanton saw an unprecedented opportunity for disenfranchised groups. Women, as well as Black Americans, North and South, could seize political rights. Stanton formed the Women's Loyal National League in 1863, which petitioned Congress for a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery.[22] The Thirteenth Amendment marked a victory not only for the antislavery cause but also for the Loyal League, proving women's political efficacy and the possibility for radical change. Now, as Congress debated the meanings of freedom, equality, and citizenship for formerly enslaved people, women's rights leaders saw an opening to

advance transformations in women's status, too. On May 10, 1866, just one year after the war, the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention met in New York City to discuss what many agreed was an extraordinary moment, full of promise for fundamental social change. Elizabeth Cady Stanton presided over the meeting. Also in attendance were prominent abolitionists with whom Stanton and other women's rights leaders had joined forces in the years leading up to the war. Addressing this crowd of social reformers, Stanton captured the radical spirit of the hour: "Now in the reconstruction," she declared, "is the opportunity, perhaps for the century, to base our government on the broad principle of equal rights for all."[23] Stanton chose her universal language—"equal rights for all"—with intention, setting an agenda of universal suffrage. Thus, in 1866, the National Women's Rights Convention officially merged with the American Anti-Slavery Society to form the American Equal Rights Association (AERA). This union marked the culmination of the long-standing partnership between abolitionists and women's rights advocates.

Figure 14.7. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton maintained a strong and productive relationship for nearly half a century as they sought to secure political rights for women. While the fight for women's rights stalled during the war, it sprung back to life as Anthony, Stanton, and others formed the American Equal Rights Association. [Elizabeth Cady Stanton, seated, and Susan B. Anthony, standing, three-quarter length portrait], between 1880 and 1902. Library of Congress.

The AERA was split over whether Black male suffrage should take precedence over universal suffrage, given the political climate of the South. Some worried that political support for freedmen would be undermined by the pursuit of women's suffrage. For example, AERA member Frederick Douglass insisted that the ballot was literally a "question of life and death" for Southern Black men, but not for women.[24] Some African American women challenged white suffragists in other ways. Frances Harper, for example, a freeborn Black woman living in Ohio, urged them to consider their own privilege as white and middle class. Universal suffrage, she argued, would not so clearly address the complex difficulties posed by racial, economic, and gender inequality.[25]

These divisions came to a head early in 1867, as the AERA organized a campaign in Kansas to determine the fate of Black and women's suffrage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her partner in the movement, Susan B. Anthony, made the journey to advocate for universal suffrage. Yet they soon realized that their allies were distancing themselves from women's suffrage in order to advance Black enfranchisement. Disheartened, Stanton and Anthony allied instead with white supremacists who supported women's equality. Many fellow activists were dismayed by Stanton's and Anthony's willingness to appeal to racism to advance their cause.[26]

These tensions finally erupted over conflicting views of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Women's rights leaders vigorously protested the Fourteenth Amendment. Although it established national citizenship for all persons born or naturalized in the United States, the amendment also introduced the word male into the Constitution for the first time. After the Fifteenth Amendment ignored sex as an unlawful barrier to suffrage, an omission that appalled Stanton, the AERA officially dissolved. Stanton and Anthony formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), while suffragists who supported the Fifteenth Amendment, regardless of its limitations, founded the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA).

A PETITION

FOR

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

The undersigned, Women of the United States, respectfully ask an amendment of the Constitution that shall prohibit the several States from disfranchising any of their citizens on the ground of sex.

In making our demand for Suffrage, we would call your attention to the fact that we represent fifteen million people—one half the entire population of the country—intelligent, virtuous, native-born American citizens; and yet stand outside the pale of political recognition.

The Constitution classes us as "free people," and counts us *whole* persons in the basis of representation; and yet are we governed without our consent, compelled to pay taxes without appeal, and punished for violations of law without choice of judge or juror.

The experience of all ages, the Declarations of the Fathers, the Statute Laws of our own day, and the fearful revolution through which we have just passed, all prove the uncertain tenure of life, liberty and property so long as the ballot—the only weapon of self-protection—is not in the hand of every citizen.

Therefore, as you are now amending the Constitution, and, in harmony with advancing civilization, placing new safeguards round the individual rights of four millions of emancipated slaves, we ask that you extend the right of Suffrage to Woman—the only remaining class of disfranchised citizens—and thus fulfil your Constitutional obligation "to Guarantee to every State in the Union a Republican form of Government."

As all partial application of Republican principles must ever breed a complicated legislation as well as a discontented people, we would pray your Honorable Body, in order to simplify the machinery of government and ensure domestic tranquillity, that you legislate hereafter for persons, citizens, tax-payers, and not for class or caste.

For justice and equality your petitioners will ever pray.

NAMES.	RESIDENCE.
Elizabeth Stanton	New York
Susan B. Anthony	Rochester – N. Y.
Antoinette Brown Blackwell	New York
Lucy Stone	Newark N. Jersey
Joanna S. Moore	48 Livingston. Brooklyn
Ernestine L. Rose	New York
Harriet E. Eaton	6. West 14th Street N.Y.
Catharine C. Wilkinson	83 Clinton Place New York
Elizabeth C. Tilton	48 Livingston St. Brooklyn
Mary Fowler Gilbert	293 W. 19th St. New York
Mary E. Gilbert	New York
Mc Griffith	New York.

Figure 14.8. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the great women's rights and abolition activist, was one of the strongest forces in the universal suffrage movement. Her name can be seen at the top of this petition to extend suffrage to all regardless of sex, which was presented to Congress on January 29, 1866. It did not pass, and women would not gain the vote for more than half a century after Stanton and others signed this petition. Petition of E. Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, and Others Asking for an Amendment of the Constitution that Shall Prohibit the Several States from Disfranchising Any of Their Citizens on the Ground of Sex, 1865. National Archives and Records Administration.

The NWSA soon rallied around a new strategy: the New Departure. This new approach interpreted the Constitution as already guaranteeing women the right to vote. They argued that by nationalizing citizenship for all people and protecting all rights of citizens—including the right to vote—the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments guaranteed women's suffrage. Broadcasting the New Departure, the NWSA encouraged women to register to vote, which roughly seven hundred did between 1868 and 1872. Susan B. Anthony was one of them, and was arrested but then acquitted in trial. In 1875, the Supreme Court addressed this constitutional argument, acknowledging women's citizenship but arguing that suffrage was not a right guaranteed to all citizens. This ruling not only defeated the New Departure but also coincided with the Court's broader reactionary interpretation of the Reconstruction amendments that significantly limited freedpeople's rights. Following this defeat, many suffragists like Stanton increasingly replaced the ideal of universal suffrage with arguments about the virtue that white women would bring to the polls. These new arguments often hinged on racism and declared the necessity of white women voters to keep Black men in check.[27]

Advocates for women's suffrage were largely confined to the North, but Southern women were experiencing social transformations as well. Moreover, during the war, Southern white women had been called on to do traditional men's work, chopping wood and managing businesses. While white Southern women decided whether and how to return to their prior status, African American women embraced new freedoms and a redefinition of womanhood.

The Civil War showed white women, especially upper-class women, life without their husbands' protection. Many did not like what they saw, especially given the possibility of racial equality. Formerly wealthy women hoped to maintain their social status by rebuilding the prewar social hierarchy. Through Ladies' Memorial

Associations (LMAs) and other civic groups, Southern women led the efforts to bury and memorialize the dead, praising and bolstering their men's masculinity through nationalist speeches and memorials. LMAs grew out of the Soldiers' Aid Society and became the precursor and custodian of the Lost Cause narrative. Proponents of the Lost Cause tried to rewrite the history of the antebellum South to deemphasize the brutality of slavery. They also created the myth that the Civil War was fought over states' rights instead of slavery, which was the actual cause. LMAs and their ceremonies created new holidays during which white Southerners could reaffirm their allegiance to the Confederacy and express their opposition to Black rights. For instance, some LMAs celebrated the anniversary of Stonewall Jackson's death on May 10.[28] Through these activities, Southern women took on political roles in the South.

Southern Black women also sought to redefine their public and private lives. Their efforts to control their labor met the immediate opposition of Southern white women. Gertrude Clanton, a plantation mistress before the war, disliked cooking and washing dishes, so she hired an African American woman to do the washing. A misunderstanding quickly developed. The laundress, nameless in Gertrude's records, performed her job and returned home. Gertrude believed that her money had purchased a day's labor, not just the load of washing, and she became quite frustrated. Meanwhile, this washerwoman and others like her set wages and hours for themselves, and in many cases began to take washing into their own homes in order to avoid the surveillance of white women and the sexual threat posed by white men.[29]

Similar conflicts raged across the South. White Southerners demanded that African American women work in the plantation home and instituted apprenticeship systems to place African American children in unpaid labor positions. African American women combated these attempts by refusing to work at jobs without fair pay or fair conditions and by clinging tightly to their children.

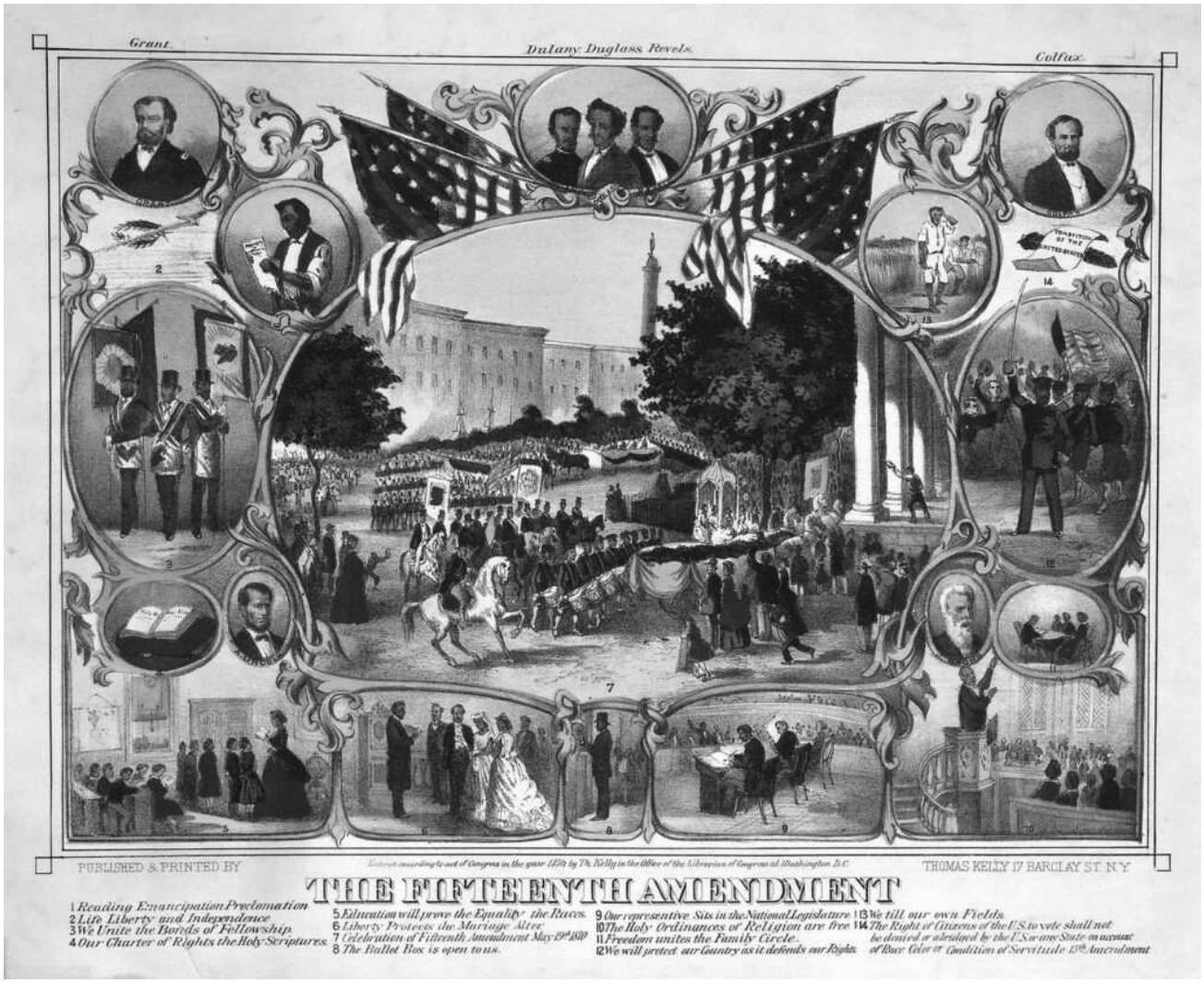
Grant.
Dulany Douglass Revels.
Colfax.
PUBLISHED & PRINTED BY
THOMAS KELLY 17 BARCLAY ST. N.Y.
THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT
1 Reading Emancipation Proclamation
2 Life Liberty and Independence
3 We Unite the Bonds of Fellowship
4 Our Charter of Rights the Holy Scriptures
5 Education will prove the Equality the Races.
6 Liberty Protects the Marriage Alter
7 Celebration of Fifteenth Amendment May 19th 1870
8 The Ballot Box is open to us.
9 Our representive Sits in the National Legislature
10 The Holy Ordinances of Religion are free
11 Freedom unites the Family Circle.
12 We will protect our Country as it defends our Rights
13 We till our own Fields.
14 The Right of Citizens of the U.S. to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or any State on account of Race Color or Condition of Servitude 15th Amendment

Figure 14.9. The Fifteenth Amendment prohibited discrimination in voting rights on the basis of race, color, or previous status (i.e. slavery). While the amendment was not all-encompassing in that women were not included, it was an extremely significant ruling in affirming the liberties of African American men. This print depicts a huge parade held in Baltimore, Maryland, on May 19, 1870, surrounded by portraits of abolitionists and scenes of African Americans exercising their rights. Thomas Kelly after James C. Beard, The 15th Amendment. Celebrated May 19th 1870, 1870. Library of Congress.

Like white LMA members, African American women formed clubs to bury their dead, celebrate African American masculinity, and provide aid to their communities. On May 1, 1865, African Americans in Charleston created the precursor to the modern Memorial Day holiday by mourning the Union dead buried hastily on a racetrack turned prison.[30] Like their white counterparts, the three hundred African American women who participated had been members of the local Patriotic Association, which aided freedpeople during the war. African American women continued participating in federal Decoration Day ceremonies and, later, formed their own club organizations. Racial violence, whether city riots or rural vigilantes, continued to threaten these vulnerable households. Nevertheless,

the formation and preservation of African American households became a paramount goal for African American women.

White and Black Southern women faced parallel but distinct challenges during Reconstruction. Southern women, both white and Black, celebrated the return of their brothers, husbands, and sons, but couples separated for many years by war and enslavement struggled to adjust. To make matters worse, many men returned with physical or mental wounds for war and slavery. For white families, suicide and divorce became more acceptable, while the opposite occurred for Black families. Since the entire South suffered from economic devastation, many families were impoverished and sank into debt. All Southern women faced economic devastation, lasting wartime trauma, and enduring racial tensions.

V. Racial Violence in Reconstruction

Violence shattered the dream of biracial democracy. Still steeped in the violence of slavery, white Southerners could scarcely imagine Black free labor. Congressional investigator Carl Schurz reported that in the summer of 1865, Southerners shared a near unanimous sentiment: "You cannot make the negro work, without physical compulsion."[31] Violence had been used in the antebellum period to enforce slave labor and to define racial difference. In the postemancipation period, it was used to stifle Black advancement and return to the old order.

Much of life in the antebellum South had been premised on slavery. The social order rested on a subjugated underclass, and the labor system required unfree laborers. A notion of white supremacy and Black inferiority undergirded it all. White people were understood as fit for freedom and citizenship, Black people for chattel slave labor. The Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House and the subsequent adoption by the US Congress of the Thirteenth Amendment destroyed the institution of American slavery and threw Southern society into disarray. The foundation of Southern society had been shaken, but Southern

whites used Black Codes and racial terrorism to reassert control over formerly enslaved people.

Racial violence in the Reconstruction period took three major forms: riots against Black political authority, interpersonal fights, and organized vigilante groups. There were riots in Southern cities several times during Reconstruction. The most notable were the riots in Memphis and New Orleans in 1866, but other large-scale urban conflicts erupted in places including Laurens, South Carolina, in 1870; Colfax, Louisiana, in 1873; New Orleans in 1874; Yazoo City, Mississippi, in 1875; and Hamburg, South Carolina, in 1876. Southern cities grew rapidly after the war as migrants from the countryside—particularly freedpeople—flocked to urban centers. Cities became centers of Republican control. But white conservatives chafed at the influx of Black residents and the establishment of biracial politics. In nearly every conflict, white conservatives initiated violence in reaction to Republican rallies or conventions or elections in which Black men were to vote. The death tolls of these conflicts remain incalculable, and victims were overwhelmingly Black.

Figure 14.10. The Ku Klux Klan was just one of a number of vigilante groups that arose after the war to terrorize African Americans and Republicans throughout the South. The KKK brought violence into the voting polls, the workplace, and — as seen in this Harper's Weekly print — the homes of Black Americans. Frank Bellew, Visit of the Ku-Klux,"1872. Wikimedia.

Even everyday violence between individuals disproportionally targeted African Americans during Reconstruction. African Americans gained citizenship rights like the ability to serve on juries as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment. But Southern white men were almost never prosecuted for violence against Black victims. White men beat or shot Black men with relative impunity, and did so over minor squabbles, labor disputes, long-standing grudges, and crimes of passion. These incidents sometimes were reported to local federal authorities like the army or the Freedmen's Bureau, but more often than not such violence was unreported and unprosecuted.[32]

The violence committed by organized vigilante groups, sometimes called nightriders or bushwhackers, was more often premeditated. Groups of nightriders operated under cover of darkness and wore disguises to curtail Black political involvement. Nightriders harassed and killed Black candidates and officeholders and frightened voters away from the polls. They also aimed to limit Black economic mobility by terrorizing freedpeople who tried to purchase land or otherwise become too independent from the white enslavers they used to rely on. They were terrorists and vigilantes, determined to stop the erosion of the antebellum South, and they were widespread and numerous, operating throughout the South. The Ku Klux Klan emerged in the late 1860s as the most infamous of these groups.

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was organized in 1866 in Pulaski, Tennessee, and had spread to nearly every state of the former Confederacy by 1868. The KKK drew heavily from the antebellum Southern elite, but Klan groups sometimes overlapped with criminal gangs or former Confederate guerrilla groups. The Klan's reputation became so potent, and its violence so widespread, that many groups not formally associated with it were called Ku Kluxers, and to "Ku Klux" meant to commit vigilante violence. While it is difficult to differentiate KKK actions from those of similar groups, such as the White Line, the Knights of the White Camellia, and the White Brotherhood, the distinctions hardly matter. All such groups were part of a

web of terror that spread throughout the South during Reconstruction. In Panola County, Mississippi, between August 1870 and December 1872, twenty-four KKK-style murders occurred. And nearby, in Lafayette County, Klansmen drowned thirty Black Mississippians in a single mass murder. Sometimes the violence was aimed at Black men or women who had tried to buy land or dared to be insolent toward a white Southerner. Other times, as with the beating of Republican sheriff and tax collector Allen Huggins, the KKK targeted white politicians who supported freedpeople's civil rights. Numerous Republican politicians, perhaps dozens, were killed, either while in office or while campaigning. Thousands of individual citizens, men and women, white and Black, had their homes raided and were whipped, raped, or murdered.[33]

The federal government responded to Southern paramilitary tactics by passing the Enforcement Acts between 1870 and 1871. The acts made it criminal to deprive African Americans of their civil rights. The acts also deemed violent Klan behavior as acts of rebellion against the United States and allowed for the use of US troops to protect freedpeople. For a time, the federal government, its courts, and its troops, sought to put an end to the KKK and related groups. But the violence continued. By 1876, as Southern Democrats reestablished "home rule" and "redeemed" the South from Republicans, federal opposition to the KKK weakened. National attention shifted away from the South and the activities of the Klan, but African Americans remained trapped in a world of white supremacy that restricted their economic, social, and political rights.

White conservatives would assert that Republicans, in denouncing violence, were "waving a bloody shirt" for political opportunity. The violence, according to many white conservatives, was fabricated, or not as bad as it was claimed, or an unavoidable consequence of the enfranchisement of African Americans. On December 22, 1871, R. Latham of Yorkville, South Carolina, wrote to the New York Tribune, voicing the beliefs of many white Southerners as he declared that "the same principle that prompted the white men at Boston, disguised as Indians, to board, during the darkness of night, a vessel with tea, and throw her cargo into the Bay, clothed some of our people in Ku Klux gowns, and sent them out on missions technically illegal. Did the Ku Klux do wrong? You are ready to say they did and we

will not argue the point with you. . . . Under the peculiar circumstances what could the people of South Carolina do but resort to Ku Kluxing?"[34]

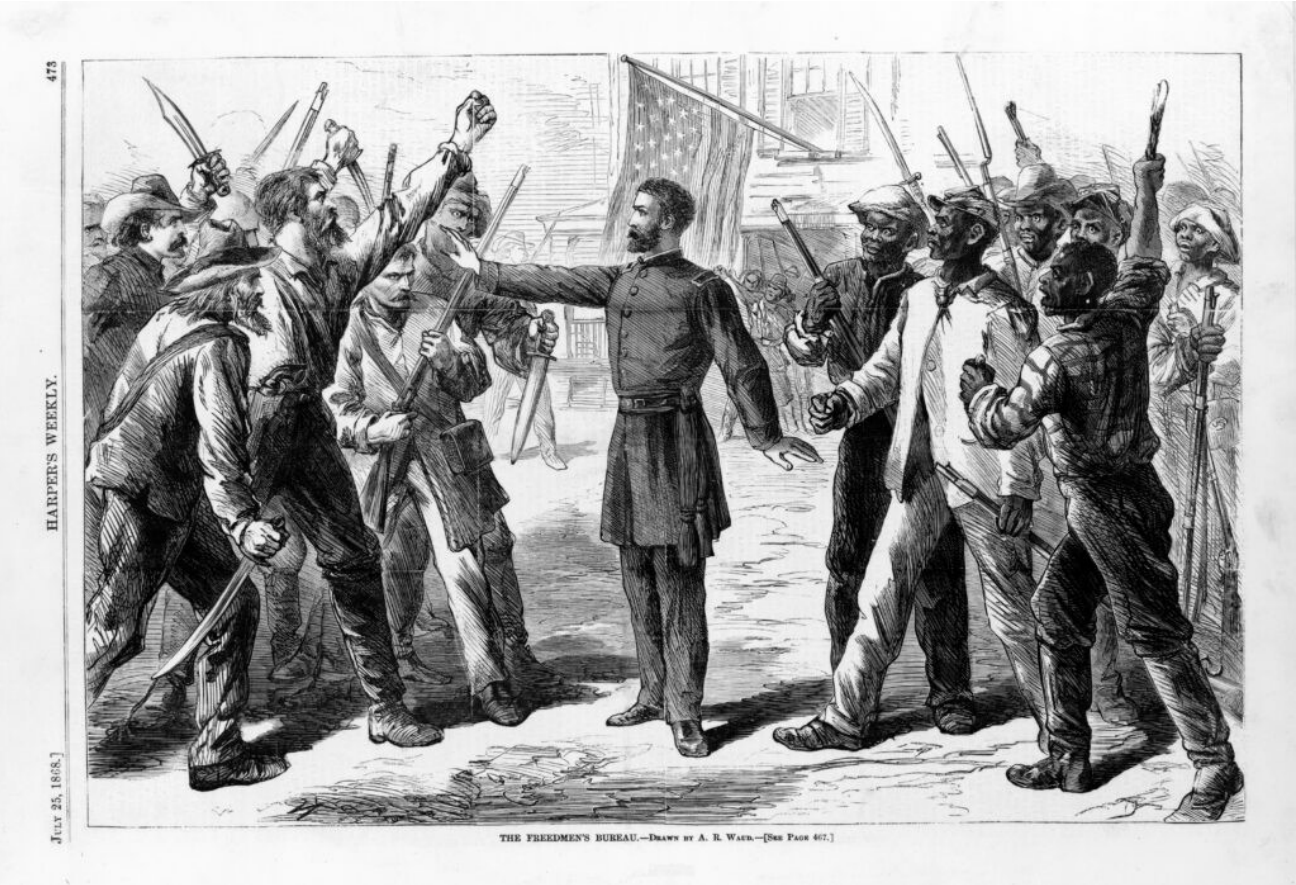

Figure 14.11. The federal government created the Freedmen's Bureau to assist freed people in securing their rights and their livelihoods. In this Harper's Weekly print, The Freedmen's Bureau official protecting the Black men and women from the angry and riotous mob of white Americans stood as a representation of the entire Bureau. Soon the Bureau and the federal government would recognize that they could not accomplish a fraction of what they set out to do, including keeping African Americans safe and free in the South. Alfred R. Waud, *The Freedmen's Bureau*, 1868. Library of Congress.

Victims and witnesses to the violence told a different story. Sallie Adkins of Warren County, Georgia, was traveling with her husband, Joseph, a Georgia state senator, when he was assassinated by Klansmen on May 10, 1869. She wrote President Ulysses S. Grant, asking for both physical protection and justice. "I am no Statesman," she disclaimed; "I am only a poor woman whose husband has been murdered for his devotion to his country. I may have very foolish ideas of Government, States & Constitutions. But I feel that I have claims upon my country. The Rebels imprisoned my Husband. Pardoned Rebels murdered him. There is no law for the punishment of them who do deeds of this sort. . . . I demand that you, President Grant, keep the pledge you made the nation—make it safe for any man to utter boldly and openly his devotion to the United States."[35]

The political and social consequences of the violence were as lasting as the physical and mental trauma suffered by victims and witnesses. Terrorism worked to end federal involvement in Reconstruction and helped to usher in a new era of racial repression.

African Americans actively sought ways to shed the vestiges of slavery. Many discarded the names their former enslavers had chosen for them and adopted new names like "Freeman" and "Lincoln" that affirmed their new identities as free citizens. Others resettled far from their former plantations, hoping to eventually farm their own land or run their own businesses. By the end of Reconstruction, the desire for self-definition, economic independence, and racial pride coalesced in the founding of dozens of Black towns across the South. Perhaps the most well known of these towns was Mound Bayou, Mississippi, a Delta town established in 1887 by Isaiah Montgomery and Ben Green, formerly enslaved by Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his brother Joseph. Residents of the town took pride in the fact that African Americans owned all of the property in town, including banks, insurance companies, shops, and the surrounding farms. The town celebrated African American cultural and economic achievements during their annual festival, Mound Bayou Days. These tight-knit communities provided African Americans with spaces where they could live free from the indignities of segregation and the exploitation of sharecropping on white-owned plantations.[36]

VI. Economic Development During the Civil War and Reconstruction

The Civil War destroyed and then transformed the American economy. In 1859 and 1860, wealthy Southern planters were flush after producing record cotton crops. Southern prosperity relied on over four million enslaved African American to grow cotton, along with a number of other staple crops across the region. Cotton fed the textile mills of America and Europe and brought great wealth to the region. On the eve of war, the American South enjoyed more per capita wealth than any other slave

economy in the New World. To their enslavers, these people constituted their most valuable assets, worth roughly $3 billion.[37] Yet this wealth obscured the gains in infrastructure, industrial production, and financial markets that occurred north of the Mason-Dixon Line, a fact that the war would unmask for all to see.

In contrast to the slave South, Northerners praised their region as a land of free labor, populated by farmers, merchants, and wage laborers. It was also home to a robust market economy. By 1860, Northerners could buy clothing made in a New England factory, or light their homes with kerosene oil from Pennsylvania. The Midwest produced seas of grain that fed the country, with enough left over for export to Europe. Farther west, mining and agriculture were the mainstays of life. Along with the textile mills, shoe factories, and iron foundries, the firms that produced McCormick's wheat harvesters and Colt's firearms displayed the technical advances of Northern manufacturers. Their goods crisscrossed the country on the North's growing railroad network. An extensive network of banks and financial markets helped aggregate capital that could be reinvested into further growth.

The Civil War, like all wars, interrupted the rhythms of commercial life by destroying lives and property. This was especially true in the South. From 1861 onward, the Confederate government struggled to find the guns, food, and supplies needed to field an army. Southerners did make astonishing gains in industrial production during this time, but it was never enough. The Union's blockade of the Atlantic prevented the Confederacy from financing the war with cotton sales to Europe. To pay their troops and keep the economy alive, the Confederate Congress turned to printing paper money that quickly sank in value and led to rapid inflation. In many cases, Confederate officials dispensed with taxes paid in cash and simply impressed the food and materials needed from their citizens. Perhaps most striking of all, in the vast agricultural wealth of the South, many Southerners struggled to find enough to eat.

Figure 14.12. George N. Barnard, City of Atlanta, Ga., no. 1, c. 1866. Library of Congress.

The war also pushed the US government to take unprecedented steps. In late 1861, Congress created the nation's first fiat currency, called greenbacks. Congress raised tariffs and passed the first national income tax in 1862, and in 1863, created the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency to regulate the national banking system. At first, the expansion of the currency and the rapid rise in government spending created an uptick in business in 1862–1863. As the war dragged on, inflation also hit the North. Workers demanded higher wages to pay rents and buy necessities, while the business community groaned under their growing tax burden. The United States, however, never embarked on a policy of impressment for food and supplies. The factories and farms of the North successfully supplied Union troops, while the federal government, with some adjustments, found the means to pay for the war.

None of this is to suggest that the North's superior ability to supply its war machine made the outcome of the war inevitable. Any account of the war must consider the tangled web of politics, battles, and economics that occurred between 1861 and 1865. But the aftermath of the war left portions of the Confederacy in ruins. State

governments were mired in debt. White planters had most of their capital tied up in enslaved laborers and so lost most of their wealth. Cotton remained the most significant crop, but the war changed how it was grown and sold. Planters broke up large farms into smaller plots tended by single families in exchange for a portion of the crop, a system called sharecropping. Once cotton production resumed, Americans found that their cotton now competed with new cotton plantations around the world. For the South as a whole, the war and Reconstruction marked the start of a period of deep poverty that would last until at least the New Deal of the 1930s.

Figure 14.13. War brought destruction across the South. Governmental and private buildings, communication systems, the economy, and transportation infrastructure were all debilitated. [Richmond, Va. Crippled locomotive, Richmond & Petersburg Railroad depot], c. 1865. Library of Congress.

Emancipation was the single most important economic, social, and political outcome of the war. Freedom empowered African Americans in the South to rebuild families, make contracts, hold property, and move freely for the first time. Republicans in the South attempted to transform the region into a free-labor economy like the North. Yet the transition from slave labor to free labor was never so clear. Well into the twentieth century, white Southerners used a combination of legal coercion and extralegal violence to maintain systems of bound labor. Vagrancy laws enabled law enforcement to justify the arrest of innocent Black men and women, and the convict-lease system meant that arbitrary arrests often resulted in

decades of forced, uncompensated labor. But this new form of servitude, which continued until World War II, was only the most extreme example of an array of economic injustices. In the later nineteenth century, poor whites would form mobs and go "white-capping" to scare away Black job seekers.[38] Lacking the means to buy their own farms, Black farmers often turned to sharecropping, which often led to cycles of debt that kept families bound to the land.[39]

Victory did not produce a sudden economic boom for the rest of the United States, either. The North would not regain its prewar pace of industrial and commodity output until the 1870s. But the war did prove beneficial to wealthy Northern farmers who could afford new technologies. Wartime labor shortages promoted the use of mechanical reapers, reducing demand for labor, boosting farm yields, and sowing the seeds of inequality.

Wartime laws also transformed the relationship between the federal government and the American economy. New tariff laws sheltered Northern industry from European competition. The Morrill Land Grant helped create colleges such as the University of California, the University of Illinois, and the University of Wisconsin. With the creation of the national banking system and greenbacks, Congress replaced hundreds of state bank notes with a system of federal currency that accelerated trade and exchange. This was not to say that Republican policy worked for everyone. The Homestead Act, meant to open the West to small farmers, was often frustrated by railroad corporations and speculators. The Transcontinental Railroad, launched during the war, failed to produce substantial economic gains for years.

Figure 14.14. Massachusetts Agricultural College (now known as the University of Massachusetts Amherst) was one of many colleges founded through the Federal Morrill-Land Grant Colleges Act. Massachusetts Agricultural College, Amherst, Mass. 1879, 1880. Wikimedia.

The war years forged a close relationship between government and the business elite, a relationship that sometimes resulted in corruption and catastrophe, as it did when markets crashed on Black Friday, September 24, 1869. This new relationship created a political backlash, especially in the West and South, against Washington's perceived Eastern and industrial bias. Conflicts over emancipation and civil rights quickly gave way to long political conflict over the direction of American economic development.

VII. Reconstruction and the West

The end of the Civil War brought new violence to the West, as the United States devoted increased resources toward dispossessing Indigenous people. Groups like the Utes and Paiutes were pushed out of the Rocky Mountains by US expansion into Colorado and away from the northern Great Basin by the expanding Mormon population in Utah Territory in the 1850s and 1860s. Faced with a shrinking territorial base, members of these two groups often joined the US military in its

campaigns in the southwest against other powerful Native groups like the Hopi, the Zuni, the Jicarilla Apache, and especially the Navajo, whose population of at least ten thousand engaged in both farming and sheep herding on some of the most valuable lands acquired by the United States after the Mexican War.

Conflicts between the US military, American settlers, and Native nations increased throughout the 1850s. By 1862, General James Carleton began searching for a reservation where he could remove the Navajo and end their threat to US expansion in the Southwest. Carleton selected a dry, almost treeless site in the Bosque Redondo Valley, three hundred miles from the Navajo homeland. In April 1863, Carleton gave orders to Colonel Kit Carson to round up the entire Navajo population and escort them to Bosque Redondo. Those who resisted would be shot. Thus began a period of Navajo history called the Long Walk, which remains deeply important to Navajo people today. The Long Walk was not a single event but a series of forced marches to the reservation at Bosque Redondo between August 1863 and December 1866. Conditions at Bosque Redondo were horrible. Provisions provided by the US Army were not only inadequate but often spoiled; disease was rampant, and thousands of Navajos died.

By 1868, it had become clear that life at the reservation was unsustainable. General William Tecumseh Sherman visited the reservation and wrote of the inhumane situation in which the Navajo were essentially kept as prisoners, but the lack of cost-effectiveness was the main reason Sherman recommended that the Navajo be returned to their homeland in the West. On June 1, 1868, the Navajo signed the Treaty of Bosque Redondo, an unprecedented treaty in the history of US-Native relations in which the Navajo were able to return from the reservation to their homeland.

The treaties that had been signed with numerous Native nations in California in the 1850s were never ratified by the Senate. Over one hundred distinct Native groups lived in California before the Spanish and American conquests, but by 1880, the Native population of California had collapsed from about 150,000 on the eve of the Gold Rush to a little less than 20,000. A few reservation areas were eventually set up by the US government to collect what remained of the Native population, but most

were dispersed throughout California. This was partly the result of state laws from the 1850s that allowed white Californians to obtain both Native children and adults as "apprentice" laborers by merely bringing the desired laborer before a judge and promising to feed, clothe, and eventually release them after a period of "service" that ranged from ten to twenty years. Thousands of California's Natives were thus pressed into a form of slave labor that supported the growing mining, agricultural, railroad, and cattle industries.

As settler incursions continued to provoke conflict, Americans pushed for a new "peace policy." Congress, confronted with these tragedies and further violence, authorized in 1868 the creation of an Indian Peace Commission. The commission's study of Native Americans decried prior American policy and galvanized support for reformers. After the inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant the following spring, Congress allied with prominent philanthropists to create the Board of Indian Commissioners, a permanent advisory body to oversee Indigenous affairs and prevent the further outbreak of violence. The board effectively Christianized American Indian policy. Much of the reservation system was handed over to Protestant churches, which were tasked with finding agents and missionaries to manage reservation life. Congress hoped that religiously minded men might fare better at creating just assimilation policies and persuading Native Americans to accept them. Historian Francis Paul Prucha believed that this attempt at a new "peace policy . . . might just have properly been labelled the 'religious policy.'"[40]

Many female Christian missionaries played a central role in cultural reeducation programs that attempted to not only instill Protestant religion but also impose traditional American gender roles and family structures. They endeavored to replace Indigenous peoples' tribal social units with small, patriarchal households. Women's labor became a contentious issue because few tribes divided labor according to the gender norms of middle- and upper-class Americans. Fieldwork, the traditional domain of white males, was primarily performed by Native women, who also usually controlled the products of their labor, if not the land that was worked, giving them status in society as laborers and food providers. For missionaries, the goal was to get Native women to leave the fields and engage in more proper "women's" work—housework. Christian missionaries performed much as secular

federal agents had. Few American agents could meet Native Americans on their own terms. Most Americans viewed Indigenous peoples on reservations as lazy and thought of Indigenous cultures as inferior to their own. The views of J. L. Broaddus, appointed to oversee several small tribes on the Hoopa Valley reservation in California, are illustrative: in his annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1875, he wrote, "The great majority of them are idle, listless, careless, and improvident. They seem to take no thought about provision for the future, and many of them would not work at all if they were not compelled to do so. They would rather live upon the roots and acorns gathered by their women than to work for flour and beef."[41]

VIII. The End of Reconstruction

Reconstruction ended when Northerners abandoned the cause of the formerly enslaved and Democrats recaptured Southern politics. Between 1868 and 1877, and especially after the Panic of 1873, economic issues supplanted Reconstruction as the foremost issue on the national agenda. The biggest threat to Republican power in the South had been the violence and intimidation of white Democrats. Only the presence of federal troops in key Southern cities prevented Reconstruction's overthrow. But the United States never committed the personnel required to restore order and guarantee Black Southerners the rights promised by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Republicans and Democrats responded to economic uncertainty by retreating from Reconstruction. War-weary from a decade of military and political strife, so-called Stalwart Republicans turned from the idealism of civil rights to the practicality of economics and party politics. They won particular influence during Ulysses S. Grant's first term as president (1868–1872). By the early 1870s, Stalwart Republicans assumed control of Republican Party politics.

Meanwhile, New Departure Democrats—who focused on business, economics, political corruption, and trade—gained strength by distancing themselves from

proslavery Democrats and Copperheads. In the South, they were called Redeemers. White Southerners initially opposed the Redeemers and instead clung tightly to white supremacy and the Confederacy, but between 1869 and 1871, the Redeemers won support from white Southerners by promising local rule by white Democrats, rather than Black or white Republicans. By 1871, Redeemers won political control and overthrew Reconstruction in three important states: Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia.

In September 1873, Jay Cooke and Company declared bankruptcy, resulting in bank runs and closures that spiraled into a six-year depression. The Panic of 1873 crushed the nation's already suffering laboring class and destroyed whatever remaining idealism Northerners had about Reconstruction. In the South, where many farms were capitalized entirely through loans, sources of credit vanished, many landowners defaulted, and farmers entered an already oversaturated labor market. Wages plummeted and a growing system of debt peonage trapped workers in endless cycles of poverty. The economic turmoil enabled the Democrats to take control of the House of Representatives after the 1874 elections, blunting the legislature's capacity to any longer direct Reconstruction.

Figure 14.15. During the Panic of 1873, workers began demanding that the federal government help alleviate the strain on Americans. In January 1874, over 7,000 protesters congregated in New York City's Tompkins Square to insist the government make job creation a priority. They were met with brutality as police dispersed the crowd, and consequently the unemployment movement lost much of its steam. Matt Morgen, *The Red Flag in New York–Rioutous Communist Workmen Driven from the Tompkins Square by the Mounted Police, Tuesday, January 13th,* 1874. Library of Congress. Wikimedia.

On the eve of the 1876 presidential election, the nation still reeled from depression. Scandals sapped trust in the Grant Administration. By 1875, Democrats in Mississippi hatched the Mississippi Plan, a wave of violence designed to intimidate Black activists and suppress Black voters.[42] The state's Republican governor pleaded for federal intervention, but national Republicans ignored the plea. Meanwhile, Rutherford B. Hayes, a Republican, won a landslide victory in the Ohio gubernatorial election without mentioning Reconstruction, focusing instead on fighting corruption and alcohol abuse and promoting economic recovery. His success made him a potential presidential candidate. The stage was set for an election that would end Reconstruction as a national issue.

Republicans chose Rutherford B. Hayes as their nominee; Democrats chose Samuel J. Tilden, who ran on honest politics and home rule in the South. Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina would determine the president. Despite the enduring presence of Reconstruction in those states, white conservatives organized violence and fraud with impunity. With the election results contested, a federal special electoral commission voted along party lines—eight Republicans for, seven Democrats against—in favor of Hayes.

Democrats threatened to boycott Hayes's inauguration. Rival governments arose claiming to recognize Tilden as the rightfully elected president. Republicans, fearing another sectional crisis, reached out to Democrats. In what became known as the Compromise of 1877, Democrats conceded the presidency to Hayes on the condition that all remaining troops would be removed from the South, and the South would receive special economic favors. Hayes was inaugurated in March 1877. In April, the remaining troops were ordered out of the South. The compromise allowed Southern Democrats, no longer fearing reprisal from federal troops or Northern politicians for their flagrant violence and intimidation of Black voters, to return to power.

After 1877, Republicans no longer had the political capital—or political will—to intervene in the South in cases of violence and electoral fraud. In certain locations with large populations of African Americans, such as South Carolina, freedpeople continued to hold some local offices for several years. Yet, with its most revolutionary aims thwarted by 1868, and economic depression and political turmoil taking even its most modest promises off the table by the early 1870s, most of the promises of Reconstruction were unmet.

VIII. Conclusion

Reconstruction in the United States achieved Abraham Lincoln's paramount desire: the restoration of the Union. The war and its aftermath forever ended legal slavery in the United States, but African Americans remained second-class citizens, and women still struggled for full participation in the public life of the United States. The closing of Reconstruction saw North and South reunited behind the imperatives of economic growth and territorial expansion, rather than ensuring the full rights of its citizens. From the ashes of civil war, a new nation faced fresh possibilities while enduring old problems.

Military District	State	Readmission	Conservative Takeover
District 1	Virginia	1870	1870
District 2	North Carolina	1868	1870
	South Carolina	1868	1877
District 3	Alabama	1868	1874
	Florida	1868	1877
	Georgia	1870	1871
District 4	Arkansas	1868	1874
	Mississippi	1870	1876
District 5	Texas	1870	1873
	Louisiana	1868	1877
None	Tennessee	1866	1869

Figure 14.16. Table. This table shows the military districts of the seceded states of the South, the date the state was readmitted into the Union, and the date when conservatives recaptured the state house.

IX. Primary Sources

1. Freedmen discuss post-emancipation life with General Sherman, 1865

Reconstruction began before the War ended. After his famous March to the Sea in January of 1865, General William T. Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton

met with twenty of Savannah's African American religious leaders to discuss the future of the freedmen of the state of Georgia. In the excerpt below, Garrison Frazier, the chosen spokesman for the group, explains the importance of land for freedom. The result of this meeting was Sherman's famous Field Order 15, which set aside confiscated plantation lands along the coast from Charleston, S.C. to Jacksonville, FL. for Black land ownership. The policy would later be overruled and freedpeople would lose their right to the land.

2. Jourdon Anderson writes his former enslaver, 1865

Black Americans hoped that the end of the Civil War would create an entirely new world, while white southerners tried to restore the antebellum order as much as they could. Most enslavers sought to maintain control over their formerly enslaved laborers through sharecropping contracts. P.H. Anderson of Tennessee was one such former enslaver. After the war, he contacted his formerly enslaved laborer Jourdon Anderson, offering him a job opportunity. The following is Jourdon Anderson's reply.

3. Charlotte Forten teaches freed children in South Carolina, 1864

Charlotte Forten was born into a wealthy Black family in Philadelphia. After receiving an education in Salem, Massachusetts, Forten became the first Black American hired to teach white students. She lent her educational expertise to the war effort by relocating to South Carolina in 1862 with the goal of educating formerly enslaved people. This excerpt from her diary explains her experiences during this time.

4. Mississippi Black Code, 1865

Many southern governments enacted legislation that reestablished antebellum power relationships. South Carolina and Mississippi passed laws known as Black Codes to regulate Black behavior and impose social and economic control. While they granted some rights to African Americans – like the right to own property, to marry or to make contracts – they also denied other fundamental rights.

Mississippi's vagrant law, excerpted here, required all freedmen to carry papers proving they had means of employment. If they had no proof, they could be arrested, fined, or even re-enslaved and leased out to their former enslaver.

5. General Reynolds describes lawlessness in Texas, 1868

Most histories of the Civil War claim that the war ended in the summer of 1865 when Confederate armies surrendered. However, violent resistance and terrorism continued in the South for over a decade. In this report, General J.J. Reynolds describes the lawlessness of Texas during Reconstruction.

6. A case of sexual violence during Reconstruction, 1866

These documents chronicle a case in the wider wave of violence that targeted people of color during Reconstruction. The first document includes Frances Thompson and Lucy Smith's testimony about their assault, rape, and robbery in 1866. The second document, demonstrates one way that white Southerners denied these claims. In 1876, Thompson was exposed for cross-dressing. For twenty years she successfully passed as a woman. Southerners trumpeted this case as evidence that widely documented cases of violence, sexual and otherwise, were fabricated.

7. Frederick Douglass on remembering the Civil War, 1877

Americans came together after the Civil War largely by collectively forgetting what the war was about. Celebrations honored the bravery of both armies, and the meaning of the war faded. Frederick Douglass and other Black leaders engaged with Confederate sympathizers in a battle of historical memory. In this speech, Douglass calls on Americans to remember the war for what it was—a struggle between an army fighting to protect slavery and a nation reluctantly transformed into a force for liberation.

8. Johnson and Reconstruction cartoon, 1866

This print mocks Reconstruction by making several allusions to Shakespeare. The center illustration shows a Black soldier as Othello and President Andrew Johnson as Iago. Johnson's slogans "Treason is a crime and must be made odious" and "I am your Moses" are on the wall. The top left shows a riot in Memphis and at the top a riot in New Orleans. At the bottom, Johnson is trying to charm a Confederate Copperhead. General Benjamin Butler is at the bottom left, accepting the Confederate surrender of New Orleans in 1862. This scene is contrasted to the bottom right where General Philips Sheridan bows to Louisiana Attorney General Andrew Herron in 1866, implying a defeat for Reconstruction. Click on the image for more information.

9. Fifteenth Amendment print, 1870

This 1870 print celebrated the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Here we see several of the themes most important to Black Americans during Reconstruction: The print celebrates the military achievements of Black veterans, the voting rights protected by the amendment, the right to marry and establish families, the creation and protection of Black churches, and the right to own and improve land. Unfortunately, many of these freedoms would be short-lived as the United States retreated from Reconstruction.

X. Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Justene Hill Edwards, with content contributions by Christopher Abernathy, Jeremiah Bauer, Lauren Brand, Michael T. Caires, Mari Crabtree, Chris Hayashida-Knight, Krista Kinslow, Brenda Lakhani, Lindsay Stallones Marshall, Ashley Mays, Keith McCall, Ryan Poe, Bradley Proctor, Emma Teitelman, Nicole Myers Turner, Caitlin Verboon, Caroline Wright, and Ben Wright.

Recommended Reading

• Blight, David. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Harvard University Press, 2001.

• Blum, Edward J. *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865–1898*. Louisiana State University Press, 2007.

• Cimbala, Paul A. *Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865–1870*. University of Georgia Press, 2003.

• Downs, Gregory P. *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War*. Harvard University Press, 2015.

• Edwards, Justine Hill. *Savings and Trust: The Rise and Betrayal of the Freedman's Bank*. Norton, 2024.

• Edwards, Laura F. *A Legal History of the Civil War and Reconstruction: A Nation of Rights*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

• Egerton, Douglas R. *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America's Most Progressive Era*. Bloomsbury, 2014.

• Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*. HarperCollins, 1988.

• Gordon-Reed, Annette. *On Juneteenth*. Norton, 2021.

• Hahn, Steven. *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Harvard University Press, 2003.

• Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920*. Harvard University Press, 1993.

• Hunter, Tera W. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War*. Harvard University Press, 1998.

• Janney, Caroline E. *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*. University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

• Jones, Jacqueline. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present*. Basic Books, 2010.

• Kantrowitz, Stephen. *More Than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829–1889*. Penguin, 2012.

• Masur, Kate. *An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.* University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

• McDaniel, W. Caleb. *Sweet Taste of Liberty: A True Story of Slavery and Restitution in America*. Oxford, 2019.

• Nelson, Megan Kate. *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War*. University of Georgia Press, 2012.

• Parsons, Elaine Frantz. *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan During Reconstruction*. University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

• Richardson, Heather Cox. *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post–Civil War North, 1865–1901*. Harvard University Press, 2001.

• Richardson, Heather Cox. *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America After the Civil War*. Yale University Press, 2008.

• Rosen, Hannah. *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South*. University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

• Silber, Nina. *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900*. University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

• Turner, Nicole Myers. *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Post-Emancipation Virginia*. University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

• Williams, Kidada E. *I Saw Death Coming: A History of Terror and Survival in the War Against Reconstruction*. Bloomsbury, 2023.

Notes

1. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (HarperCollins, 1988), xxv.[↩]
2. "The Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction," in Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America, vol. 13 (Boston, 1866), 737–39, http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/procamn.htm.[↩]
3. The House Joint Resolution proposing the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, January 31, 1865; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789–1999; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives, https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/13th-amendment#transcript.[↩]
4. Andrew Johnson, "Proclamation 179—Granting Full Pardon and Amnesty for the Offense of Treason Against the United States During the Late Civil War," December 25, 1868. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-179-granting-full-pardon-and-amnesty-for-the-offense-treason-against-the.[↩]
5. Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United States of America During the Period of Reconstruction [. . .]* . (Washington, DC, 1871), 80–82.[↩]
6. Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (Random House, 2008).[↩]
7. U.S. Statutes at Large, Volume 14 1865–1867), 39th Congress, 1st Session, 27, https://www.loc.gov/resource/llsalvol.llsal_014/?sp=59.[↩]
8. Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* (Louisiana State University Press, 1996).[↩]
9. See Ward McAfee, *Religion, Race, and Reconstruction: The Public School in the Politics of the 1870s* (State University of New York Press, 1998); Hilary Green, Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South (Fordham University Press, 2016).[↩]
10. Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*.[↩]
11. Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, xi.[↩]

12. Leslie Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah* (University of Georgia Press, 2014), 167.[↩]
13. Steven Hahn, Steven F. Miller, Susan E. O'Donovan, John C. Rodrigue, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861–1867*, series 3, vol. 1, Land and Labor, 1865 (University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 442–44.[↩]
14. *Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, Charter and by-laws* (New York, 1865).[↩]
15. Walter Fleming, *The Freedmen's Savings Bank: A Chapter in the Economic History of the Negro Race* (University of North Carolina Press, 1927), 141. See also Justene Hill Edwards, *Savings and Trust: The Rise and Betrayal of the Freedman's Bank* (Norton, 2024).[↩]
16. Heather Andrea Williams, *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012).[↩]
17. Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (Doubleday, 1900), 30; Green, *Educational Reconstruction*.[↩]
18. Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Eerdmans, 2004), 141–74.[↩]
19. Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson, *The Negro's Church* (Russell and Russell, 1933), 29–30.[↩]
20. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 92.[↩]
21. See Tomeiko Ashford Carter, ed., *Virginia Broughton: The Life and Writings of a National Baptist Missionary* (University of Tennessee Press, 2010); Shirley Wilson Logan, *We Are Coming: The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 168; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Religion, Politics, and Gender: The Leadership of Nannie Helen Burroughs," in *This Far by Faith: Readings in African-American Women's Religious Biography*, ed. Judith Weisenfeld and Richard Newman (Routledge, 2014), 157.[↩]
22. "To the Women of the Republic," address from the Women's Loyal National League supporting the abolition of slavery, January 25, 1864, SEN 38A-H20 (Kansas folder); RG 46, Records of the US Senate, National Archives, https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/WomensLoyalNationalLeague.pdf.[↩]
23. Proceedings of the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention, Held at the Church of the Puritans, New York, May 10, 1866 (New York, 1866).[↩]
24. Frederick Douglass, "We Welcome the Fifteenth Amendment: Addresses Delivered in New York, on 12–13 May 1869," in *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One, Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, ed. John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan (Yale University Press, 1991), 213–19.[↩]
25. Faye E. Dudden, *Fighting Chance: The Struggle over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America* (Oxford University Press, 2011).[↩]
26. Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 3–8.[↩]
27. Sue Davis, *The Political Thought of Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Women's Rights and the American Political Traditions* (New York University Press, 2008), 158.[↩]
28. Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 94.[↩]

29. Virginia Ingraham Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848–1889* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 272–73.[↩]
30. David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Harvard University Press, 2001), 65–71.[↩]
31. Carl Schurz, *Report on the Condition of the South*, ed. Michael Burlingame (1865; repr. Arno Press, 1969), iii.[↩]
32. Douglas R. Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America's Most Progressive Era* (Bloomsbury, 2014), 296.[↩]
33. Kidada E. Williams, *I Saw Death Coming: A History of Terror and Survival in the War Against Reconstruction* (Bloomsbury, 2023).[↩]
34. "A Defense of the Ku Klux," *Chester Reporter* (Chester, SC), January 11, 1872.[↩]
35. Sallie Adkins to Ulysses S. Grant, May 20, 1869. Letters Received, Source Chronological File, Container #7, 1868–1870: President's Letters, Folder: May–December 1869, Record Group 60, General Records of the Department of Justice, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.[↩]
36. Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 158.[↩]
37. Leonard L. Richards, *Who Freed the Slaves? The Fight over the Thirteenth Amendment* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), 258.[↩]
38. William Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (University of Illinois Press, 1993), 23.[↩]
39. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name.*[↩]
40. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 482.[↩]
41. *Bureau of Indian Affairs, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior* (US Government Printing Office, 1875), 221.[↩]
42. Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 170–209.[↩]

The American Yawp

Published in Partnership with Stanford University Press

CC BY-SA 4.0